Cultural Exchanges Through I.C.C.R.

*91. SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) what steps are proposed to be taken by Government to increase the calibre and quality of cultural exchanges and other programmes with foreign countries through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations; and

(b) details of steps and proposals in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO) : (a) and (b) ICCR functions as an autonomous organization administratively attached to the Ministry of External Affairs. The calibre and quality of cultural exchanges and other programmes with foreign countries through ICCR are ensured by the decisions and directives of the authorities of ICCR, namely;

(i) the General Assembly,

(ii) the Governing Body,

(iii) the Finance Committee, and

(iv) any other Committee set up for discharging any of the functions of the Council as directed by the President of the Council, the General Assembly of the Governing Body.

Pending Applications for Passports

*92. SHRI S. MADHAVAN : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 1669 given in the Rajya Sabha on 9th March, 1992 and state :

(a) what is the number of applications pending for issue of passports in each state; and

(b) whether Government propose to open a separate wing to dispose of the applications of N.R.Is., Indian permanently employed in foreign countries, business executives and students going for studies abroad ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO) : (a) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(b) No, Sir.

Orientation Programmes for Ambassadors

*93. SHRI YASHWANT SINHA :
SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALAVIYA :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that about 25 Ambassadors were recently in Delhi for a twelve day orientation-cum-briefing programme;

(b) if so, whether Ambassadors/Heads of Missions posted in other countries will also be called for such briefing in batches;

(c) whether it is a regular feature to call Ambassadors enmasse to Delhi from abroad periodically;

(d) the total expenditure involved in respect of all Ambassadors etc. from all over the world on their TA/DA, boarding, lodging, local transport, entertainment etc. at the conference; and

(e) whether Government propose to send them a self-contained brief in future to save the expenditure on their TA/DA etc. ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Consultations with individual Heads of Missions and Posts as well as discussions with groups of our Ambassadors from specific regions are organised from time to time. However, it was for the first time that an orientation course on our new economic policies was organised by the Foreign Service Training Institute in New Delhi for 24 of our Heads of Missions and Posts in selected target countries on March 30-April 10, 1992.